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In Praise of Stupid Emperors

By Alexander Cockburn

Quite often these days, here, at CounterPunch, we feel the sort of ecstatic incredulity that the Goths and the Vandals must have felt in the fifth century AD, rejoicing in the stupidity of the Roman Emperor Theodosius II, a fanatical Christian monophysite and book-burner who presided over the accelerating decline of the Empire, and who eventually died at the age of 49 by tumbling off his horse. The Vandals and Goths didn't anxiously scan the news bulletins from Rome hoping for news of a "better" imperial candidate who would revive the Empire's fortunes and consolidate the iron rule of Rome, under the slogan, Back to Augustus. Neither should we.

Insulated though they are from reality, one would have thought that Bush and his entourage would have noticed that their military adventure in Iraq has been faring poorly, and possibly even tip-toed towards the conclusion that a contest with a determined guerilla force backed by a supportive population may not necessarily turn out well for the invading party.

So it was with Israel's long planned onslaught on Lebanon, presented to the world as a bid to extirpate Hezbollah. The divorce from reality began many years ago. An army whose prime function for many years has been to terrorize Palestinian civilians, knock down their houses and tear out their olive groves inevitably degenerates in the quality of its officers and in its overall moral fiber. The British discovered that in 1899 in South Africa. Having for decades slaughtered tribespeople armed only with spears, the British army came up against a few

(**Emperors** *continued on page 6*)

"There will come a time when you will be the invaded and conquered. Your downfall will be as ours was, warfare against each other that blinds you to everything else. It will come not like a thunderstorm, but as a creeping mist in the night."

We Gave You Texas

By TONY SWINDELL

In the annals of American western history, no group of people has evoked so much fear and endless folklore as the Comanche Indian in frontier Texas. Who can forget their presence in popular culture, best exemplified by such movie classics as "The Searchers" with John Wayne and "The Outlaw Josey Wales" with Clint Eastwood, along with hundreds of other productions? And no, the Comanche were not cannibals with eagle feather headdresses. A buffalo skull with horns and hide and buckskin hip boots was the preferred gear.

The Comanche were arguably the most important group on the Southern Plains for 250 years. It was they who birthed the Plains Indian buffalo culture, which changed the whole territorial dynamics of the American west and partially determined the borders of both Mexico and the southwestern United States. It was the single-handed ferocity of the Comanche that prevented the Red River from becoming the northern border of Mexico and made possible the full realization of Manifest Destiny. How they did it is a proud, monumental history that's never been acknowledged.

With waves of ethnic migration once again roiling the North American continent, studying the Comanche experience can teach us something about the life cycles of social organizations like nations and human tribes. For example, why do people decide to come together into a distinct, identifiable group, and why do they fracture and fall apart? The history of the Comanche clearly shows that distinct group formation and re-formation is not only normal on every continent, but that it also invariably ignores existing political and national borders.

So, who were these powerful, extraordinarily intelligent, humorous and resourceful people called the Comanche? They were the Lords of the Plains, the finest light cavalry the world has ever seen. Even though there were never more than 20,000 riding across a 200,000 square mile domain in Texas, New Mexico and Mexico, they — of all Native American tribes — provided the most implacable and successful resistance to conquest by the Spanish, Mexicans, and French. So terrifying were the Comanche that they chased even the Apache out of Texas. They crushed all Mexican attempts to colonize the Lone Star State, and during the Civil War pushed the Texas frontier back more than 100 miles eastward to Dallas.

In 1825, the new empire of Mexico had freed itself from Spanish shackles but was on the losing side of a full-scale war with the Comanche along the length of the Rio Grande River. The raiders from Texas marauded inside Mexico with impunity for months, and by 1830 the Mexican policy of bounties for Comanche scalps was re-instituted in Chihuahua, Sonora and Durango. The Comanche actually had a stronger *de facto* ownership claim on northern Mexico than did the Mexicans themselves – and owned much of western Texas outright.

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Shortly thereafter , the Americans in the new Republic of Texas fared little better, and Texan treachery in 1840 under a flag of truce in San Antonio poisoned relations once and for all . It was war to the death after 12 Comanche chiefs were killed in an incident called the Council House Fight. The Comanche were well aware of the very recent Trail of Tears atrocity and had no intention of letting a repeat performance take place.

The Comanche by now had developed light cavalry warfare to perfection, and the American Army was never able to deal with their superior mounts. Most favored were paint and pinto-colored mustang ponies, often called Medicine Hats, and these horses were ideal for service on the semi-arid southern Plains.

During the Civil War, Confederate Missouri guerillas in Texas led by William Clark Quantrill, "Bloody" Bill Anderson and Cole Younger were astonished by the Comanche warriors' elusive prowess and marveled at their horseflesh. Only the Texas Rangers, armed with braces of the new six-shot Colt revolver, could hope to successfully engage them in battle. Single-shot firearms were virtually useless.

Yet there is much more to the Comanche story than bloodshed. They were hugely successful businessmen and merchants, joining with the Comancheros of New Mexico to develop the very first cattle drive on horseback. (Sorry, Clint, but Rowdy Yates was a Johnny-come-lately by decades). They rustled tens of thousands of Texas cattle to sell in Mexico, and on the trip back, stole practically every horse and mule south of the Rio Grande and put a major reduction in every Texas herd they came across. They also provided huge numbers of mules for Southern cotton plantations, as well as horses for the Gold Rush. The Comanche were the only Native Americans to make a science of horse breeding and trading, supplying tribes of the Northern Plains – the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho and others – with superlative animals that brought the buffalo culture into existence.

The story below is told by the legendary half-white Comanche chief called Quanah Parker. With a striking visage of long, braided black hair and gray eyes, he saw at first hand the violent legacy of ethnic migration, conflict and conquest, even genocide. After the Comanche were finally subdued in 1874, Parker went on to become successful in the conqueror's world and became one of the richest men in Texas and Oklahoma Territory.

So come into Quanah Parker's teepee now, sit, light an imaginary pipe, and let him tell you what he might have said about his people, the Lords of the Plains. Perhaps in this time of turmoil and movement of people in the land, pale faces may learn something important.

Quanah Parker's Wisdom

I tell you all this because I am now in my 65th year, your year of 1911, and my time is growing short. I am Quanah Parker, son of Peta Nacona and last chief of the Kwahar~~u~~ (phonetically, qua-haah-dah) Comanche, the Lords of the Plains. My mother was Cynthia Ann Parker, a pale face settler from Texas. I walk in the steps of Ten Bears, Red Sleeves, Green Horn, Iron Shirt, Leather Cape, and Buffalo Hump. These chiefs were the glory of the Comanche.

For almost 3,000 moons, we rode supreme across Texas. People have asked where we came from, and I tell you that we are brothers to the Shoshone, and came to Texas on foot from great mountains to the north. The story of the Comanche began when the first invaders in iron chests and helmets, the Spaniards, gave us not only the weapon which would defeat them, but transformed us from dogs into the highest of human beings. It was the horse, and the horse made us the Lords of the Plains. Not even the gun was more important. Soon, our Shoshone fathers and mothers became a distant memory and no longer existed to us. We are now the N~~u~~mu~~nuu~~ (phonetically, nuuh-muh-nuh), the People.

To us, the horse was supernatural. With it, we could kill and eat all the buffalo we wanted. We harried the Apache until they quivered like frightened children, and we watched, bemused, as the flags of six invaders came and disappeared. Only the sixth, the pale faces, persevered and brought us to ruin.

During all this time, we fought and defeated all tribes near and far. Besides the Apache, the Navaho, Ute, Crow, Pueblo, Arikara, Lakota, Kansa, Pawnee, Wichita, Waco, Osage, Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo all tasted defeat at the points of our lances and arrows. We fought many enemies, but all these wars were because they tried to steal our horses.

When I rode as chief of the Comanche, the Santa Fe Trail was already a scar on the earth, filled with a stream of white ants going west to California, endlessly, day and night, separating us from our brothers, the Sioux, the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Crow. Only the Kiowa shared our domain, which stretched from the gold trail downward to the place the Mexicans called Monterey beside the Mother Mountains.

I will tell you that the new people, the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, and Chickasaw were strange people who didn't want to fight the pale faces anymore and their thinking was confused. The Caddo in Texas were helpless against the pale faces, and my heart went out to them. We found the Tonkawa to be cannibals and decided the best thing to do was to kill them all.

Many have asked to hear the tales of the Comanche moon, so I will tell you. First, if mockingbirds were singing on a moonlit night in the Cross Timbers, smart pale faces would know we were around. We rode at night, small groups following separate routes to an agreed-upon location. We used strings of horses so none of them got tired and spent. Our war paint was black, with two black stripes across our faces. Our war whoop

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was a HAH-HAH-HAH screamed at the tops of our voices, much like the pale face gray coats and their rebel yell. We attacked suddenly, fast and hard, then retreated, dividing into small groups again so no one could follow us. We were quite a sight when we returned to our people, because we wore the things we plundered. Many warriors liked the tall, black pale face hats like the one worn by Abraham Lincoln. No one was safe from our warriors, not even a thousand miles away in Mexico.

Did you know that the Comanche almost took the life of your great warrior with the Indian name, Sherman? We would have, but attacked the wrong pale faces near Fort Griffin. I would have loved to have tied Sherman to a wagon wheel and roasted him good.

I recognize, and accept, that the Comanche will never be trusted by the Texan, who thinks he may have good reason to hate us. We killed the pale face men on sight, and it is true that we abused their women badly, but no more badly than they treated ours. Most we sold into Mexico. The children we took became Comanche, and they never wanted to return to the pale face world. We were a happy people and good-willed to one another. Our stories to each other were full of humor, and we enjoyed jokes. That shows how good our way of life was, and I am a good example of that.

Yet we showed no mercy to our enemies, and to all those who brought war to us we took it to them. Did you expect us to run away like dogs? Did you not understand that war to the Comanche was as natural as the sun and the moon dancing in the sky together? Did you think we would not fight to keep what was ours by whatever means we could?

Now I speak of Geronimo, a sensitive subject. We understood the awful things you did to him; promiscuous cut-noses were treated better. You set Geronimo down as a beggar in our midst, among his ancestral enemies, to sell the buttons off his shirt at day and sew new ones on at night until the firewater made his hands shake too much. You turned him and the few of the Apache left into women. Sometimes we would cut away the skin of our enemy's feet and make him walk to his death, but that was a fit treatment for mud faces like the Mexican vaqueros who stole our horses. On purpose, you stabbed Geronimo's heart and his soul bled to death, all for no good reason I can think of.

"Borders are nothing more than invisible boundaries set out by invaders that can be crossed anytime by anyone."

I can say this out loud to pale faces now because I am rich in pale face gold and cattle, and I call your great chief Roosevelt a friend. I still get great satisfaction in seeing the expressions on the Texans' faces when I sell them better horses than they could ever breed themselves, even today. We taught the pale faces a thing or two about horses.

What you did in our last years of freedom was shameful. You killed everything... the buffalo, and our women, and children when you couldn't kill our warriors. Was your freedom so much greater than ours? We truly knew what freedom was, here in Texas, and Palo Duro Canyon was our sacred refuge. You once fought us as great warriors before you turned to murder, but things changed after the war between the pale faces. If you put the bullet and the knife to your own women and children, you would not hesitate to do the same to us. That was a shock, and we knew in our hearts that the Comanche were doomed.

I see that your face grows long at these chastisements. Now, I will make you laugh with a funny story about your Texan hero Sam Firewater (Houston), one of the few pale faces the Comanche trusted. He came to see us in 1833, sent from the great fathers in Washington to make peace with the Comanche. The Mexicans were not happy about that and sent fancy-looking people on fine horses to tell him to get out of Texas. We know they were fine horses, because we took them, and they had to see Sam Firewater on foot. By this time, there were not many Mexicans left in Texas because we had burned all their ranches and missions, so it must have been a lonely walk for these puffed-up prairie chickens. This was very amusing to us.

Enough, then, of this. I say to you, men who think too much about history will starve. The places where our blood mingled are long gone and forgotten. It is pointless to grieve eternally. There will come a time when you, pale faces, will be the invaded and conquered. Your downfall will be as ours was, warfare against each other that blinds you to everything else. It will come not like a thunderstorm, but as a creeping mist in the night. You have not learned that borders are nothing more than invisible boundaries set out by invaders that can be crossed anytime by anyone.

As you leave my teepee, perhaps it would be good if you thought about this: it was me, during a wolf hunt once in Texas with Chief Roosevelt, who said, "We, the Comanche, gave you pale faces Texas, not some scrap of paper." This is the truth. CP

Tony Swindell is a newspaper editor in Sherman Texas. Last spring we published his "Message from a Vet of My Lai Time: Our Descent Into Hell Has Begun".

On the Spelling of Comanche Words

The Comanche Language and Cultural Preservation Committee (CLCPC) was happy to provide the correct spelling of Comanche words for this article. The Comanche Nation officially adopted a spelling and sound system that we developed in 1993. Since that time we have developed a range of language-learning material, in addition to certifying the first two Comanche language teachers for the Comanche Nation College.

For more information about our organization, please visit our website at www.comanchelanguage.org and learn about our efforts over the years to preserve our language. You can also view the official Comanche Nation web site at www.comanchenation.com, and the Comanche Nation College website at www.cnc.cc.ok.us/.

Important Upcoming Events: 7th Annual Shoshone Nations Reunion, September 25-27, 2006; 14th Annual Comanche Nation Fair, September 28 through October 1, 2006. Held on the grounds of the Comanche Nation Complex, seven miles north of Lawton, OK. 580-492-4988.

Barbara Goodin, CLCPC Coordinator.

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My Visit with Nabil Qaouk

The Roots of Hezbollah

By PEGGY RILEY THOMSON

Four years ago this summer, I found myself sitting in a cramped, fly-infested "conference room" in the by-then defunct El Khiam prison camp in southern Lebanon, listening to an impassioned address given by a man who looked and sounded as calm and yet intimidating as I'd always imagined Osama bin Laden to be.

The speaker was Nabil Qaouk, Hezbollah's commander for southern Lebanon. Tall and rail-thin, his longish beard tinged with gray, Qaouk even bore a slight physical resemblance to bin Laden, which struck me as slightly ironic, since, despite what many Americans may think, bin Laden's mostly Sunni Al Qaeda organization and the mostly Shia Hezbollah, or "Party of God," have traditionally harbored an intense dislike for one another. (There are emerging signs, however, that this situation may be changing).

My encounter with deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage's "A-team of terrorists" came while I was in Lebanon attending a conference on the plight of the struggling indigenous Christian communities throughout the Middle East. Following the conference, some of the delegates were given the necessary permission from Hezbollah to travel south to the sensitive Lebanese-Israeli border and then on to the Lebanese port city of Tyre.

In the weeks since the July 12 eruption of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel, I've found myself struggling to find some meaning in the impressions I carried away from my time spent with various Hezbollah officials.

It was hardly surprising that our tour included a stop at El Khiam. For years, the facility served as a graphic reminder of the fact that the release of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel (both at El Khiam and in Israel itself) has always been one of Hezbollah's highest priorities.

A notorious mini-Guantanamo unknown to most Americans, El Khiam was run for fifteen years by Israel's Lebanese proxies, the South Lebanon Army. Innumerable, well-documented instances of torture of Lebanese detainees seized on charges of plotting against Israel routinely took place at El Khiam until Hezbollah finally forced Israel to end its eighteen-year occupation of southern Lebanon in May of 2000. After the Israelis abruptly withdrew, the prisoners at El Khiam were immediately released in a scene of great rejoicing.

Following the Israelis' hasty departure, Hezbollah turned the prison into a macabre museum. Many of the cells were left exactly as they had looked when the prison was occupied. Electrical wires and other devices used to inflict torture were put on prominent display for visitors to see. Hezbollah routinely took visitors, including such notables as Noam Chomsky and the late Edward Said, to El Khiam so they could see for themselves the scene where countless human rights violations were undoubtedly committed at Israel's behest.

For years, Israel refused to allow either the International Red Cross or Amnesty International to inspect the facility.

In saying that the detention of the IDF soldiers is the root of the problem, Bush confuses symptoms with causes.

Everywhere I looked I saw yellow signs with green lettering (the color combination obviously chosen to echo the ubiquitous Hezbollah flag) that had been posted on the prison's dingy walls. At one point, one of our guides stopped near a narrow, tower-like structure. Holding his wrists together, he demonstrated the manner in which prisoners were allegedly bound and suspended until they died. The sign behind him told the story in simple language: "Post where two martyrs passed away." Other signs informed visitors about the use of water and dogs to frighten detainees into real or fabricated confessions. As I walked around, I remember feeling amazed that the Israelis had allowed the complex to remain standing following their withdrawal.

Before the tour, Qaouk spoke energetically and without pause for more than an hour, occasionally pounding the lectern for emphasis. (The Hezbollah commander's gestures and inflections also reminded me of some of the videos of his immediate superior, Hezbollah's leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah.)

Qaouk's barred attack on the United States for what he described as its unconditional support for Israel was a familiar refrain I'd heard countless times since I first began visiting the Middle East more than twenty years earlier. But this time, as I listened to this latest stream of invective, I detected a degree of determination fiercer than anything I'd ever heard from other representatives of Israel's Arab foes, including the once-powerful Palestine Liberation Organization.

After he had finished his speech, I approached Qaouk near the prison's "Hall of Martyrs." Noticing a cameraman nearby, I held up my hand to indicate that I did not wish to be featured that night on Al Manar, Hezbollah's highly influential television channel. Registering my discomfort, Qaouk shot a glance in the direction of the cameraman, who instantly stopped filming.

Sensing Qaouk's reluctance to speak directly to a woman, I quickly told the Hezbollah leader that I had reported from Lebanon during the 1982 Israeli invasion and had also covered the aftermath of the infamous massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps Sabra and Chatilla. Saying them aloud, my Middle Eastern "credentials" so to speak, sounded grisly and slightly pathetic. But I didn't care, as long as I managed to get Qaouk to answer a question or two. Although resolutely refusing to make eye contact with me, Qaouk's obvious surprise at encountering an American who had not only heard of the massacre, but who had actually been present immediately afterward did make him pause for a moment.

Our brief conversation left me with the distinct impression that Hezbollah's overall aims had less to do with obliterating Israel than with thwarting a possible move by that country either to reoccupy southern Lebanon or to otherwise gain control of the region. Certainly the displacement of more than a million Lebanese during the current conflict suggests that the Israeli government may indeed have been thinking along the lines of an eventual *de facto* or even formal annexation of southern Lebanon north to

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the Litani River. There is a compelling, if mostly unpublicized, reason (in addition to "security") for Israel to try to put such a plan into action. Since the beginning of the last century, long before the founding of the state Israel has had its eye on the Litani River to help meet its western-style appetite for water. And who better to help Israel secure this objective than a multinational force?

Today El Khiam prison is no more. On July 24 Israel bombed the little village of Khiam as part of its operations against Hezbollah guerrillas. The next day, in one of the most flagrant outrages thus far committed, Israel hit a clearly-marked UN outpost located next to the prison, killing four UN observers.

Later that week, according to press reports, Israeli jets apparently destroyed the prison, although its catacomb-like network of underground cells may have survived. Almost immediately, there was rampant, but quite reasonable speculation that Israel had deliberately demolished the prison to erase evidence of past war crimes and to stop Hezbollah from continuing to use the site as a powerful propaganda tool.

After leaving the prison, I met with another Hezbollah official in southern Lebanon, Sheikh Hassan Medlej, who treated our group to an outdoor lunch in a lush garden not far from the prison, near the town of Marjayoun. Our host's warmth and charm notwithstanding, I couldn't help feeling a little uncomfortable accepting hospitality from an organization thought to have been responsible for kidnapping scores of westerners in Lebanon during the 1980s, including two former colleagues of mine, Terry Anderson and John McCarthy.

Meeting with certain controversial figures on the Arab side can quickly get you slapped with the "terrorist sympathizer" label, or worse. For example, two years after my own visit to El Khiam, a high-level group from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) touched off a firestorm of criticism after they, too, met with Qaouk and then went on the same tour of the prison that I had taken. Following an avalanche of adverse publicity and protests from pro-Israel groups in the United States, two members of the delegation were forced to resign from their posts.

As a reporter who covered the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, I can't help noticing a number of similarities between that conflict and the present one. Then, as now, the Reagan Administration murmured only the faintest of protests while Israel hammered away at Lebanon with merciless intensity. But at least back then, Reagan's Middle East envoy, Philip Habib, repeatedly shuttled back and forth between Tel Aviv and Damascus, trying to establish some sort of lasting ceasefire. (At the time, ignoring Syria would have been out of the question.)

As was the case with the forty-eight-hour reprieve Israel allowed after the Qana bombing July 30, the only interim ceasefires that took place during the 1982 war were those declared unilaterally by Israel, in part to permit its forces to regroup and consolidate their positions. By the time Habib finally secured a permanent ceasefire, more than 17,500 Lebanese and Palestinians had been killed and much of Lebanon reduced to rubble.

When comparing 1982 to the present conflict there are, however, some distinct differences. For example, no one, not even Israel, has had the chutzpah to suggest rounding up the Hezbollah fighters and literally shipping them out of the country, as was done with the PLO out of Lebanon.

My 2002 encounter with Hezbollah wasn't my first. Many of us who covered the 1982 war saw evidence of the nascent movement all around us. In fact, the early coalescing of what would eventually become the Hezbollah movement was as important a story that summer, if not more so, as the routing of the PLO.

In fact, I remember one occasion during the middle of that terrible summer of 1982 when I became a witness to the early stirrings of the new guerrilla movement. One day, while in Damascus, to my surprise I heard what sounded like a parade passing by outside my hotel window. Grabbing my tape recorder, I ran outside and began following a rather untidy procession of men, women and children as they marched through the streets of the Syrian capital.

The men claimed to be members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard on their way to Baalbek in eastern Lebanon. As it turned out, these guardsmen would soon provide military training to young Shia males in camps in the Bekaa Valley. Even then, as I watched this slightly ragtag army proceeding westward toward the border, I couldn't help wondering whether Israel was in the process of creating a new enemy for itself with its invasion of Lebanon that would someday make the PLO look like schoolboys. As it turned out, this is precisely what has come to pass.

What will the next generation's Hezbollah be like? Judging by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Israel's enemies are indeed likely to become more formidable with every passing decade, in response, quite logically, to that country's stubborn refusal to cede to the Palestinians any meaningful portion of the territories it has occupied since 1967.

President Bush has repeatedly called Hezbollah's July 12 abduction of two Israeli soldiers the "root cause" of the outbreak of hostilities. The President is confusing symptoms with causes. Saying that the abduction of the soldiers is the root cause of the current conflict like saying that Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon was the result of the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London the night before the June 4 invasion began. Both incidents were not so much "root causes" as they were triggers that perhaps deliberately sparked the conflicts.

To anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of the Middle East — unfortunately President Bush probably doesn't belong in this group — it should be patently obvious that the "root cause" behind the current conflict is, quite simply, Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian territories. Everything else, including even our own terrible involvement in Iraq, is little more than a diversion from this pivotal issue, which has inflamed the region for decades. CP

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(**Emperors** *continued from page 1)*

determined Dutch farmers with modern weapons and went down to defeat.

A political and military elite fattened on corrupt arms contracts and by triumphal tours to Washington and overall adulation in the U.S. press, develops the sort of overweening arrogance most vividly evinced by the brutish chief of staff, Dan Halutz.

It was Halutz who sold Olmert and Peretz on the fantasy of swift and devastating air force raids finishing off Hezbollah. Of course what Halutz did was efficiently unite all Lebanese in loathing of Israel, while being an effective propagandist for Hezbollah. What better recruiter of sympathy for Lebanon than Halutz howling "we're going to turn Lebanon back into what it was 20 years ago," and threatening to blow up a 10-floor building for every missile.

Napoleon said he wanted lucky generals under his command. Hezbollah was certainly lucky in the Israeli military commander it faced, even though Lebanon bled terribly from Halutz's recipe for success.

The U.S. political and media elites were far more united in stupidity than their Israeli counterparts. In the old-line print press and on the networks here the reporting was awful, with CNN in the lead. But online, every day, one could open up the English language edition of Ha'aretz and read searing criticism of Israel's war. Here, on the political front, the only major politician to call for a ceasefire was the Republican senator from Nebraska, Chuck Hagel. The congressional Democrats were stentorian cheerleaders for Israel's destruction of Lebanon.

But there were some significant differences from the coverage of the 2006 onslaught on Lebanon as opposed to that of the 1982 attack. Particularly shaking to Israel and its supporters here must have been the August 3 report issued by Human Rights Watch (HRW), datelined Beirut. Amid the uproar over the slaughter of civilians in Qana, with a barrage of grotesque propaganda about Hezbollah actually importing bodies into the flattened building from morgues, came a carefully written HRW report entitled "Fatal Strikes: Israel's Indiscriminate Attacks Against Civilians in Lebanon."

"The pattern of attacks shows the Israeli military's disturbing disregard for the lives of Lebanese civilians," said Kenneth Roth, HRW's executive director. "Our research shows that Israel's claim that Hezbollah fighters are hiding among civilians does not explain, let alone justify, Israel's indiscriminate warfare."

Among the arts of diplomacy is the all-important one of covering one's tracks. We doubt even Theodosius' entourage would have matched the comical clumsiness with which Rice, Bolton and Blair tried to occlude their total sponsorship and endorsement of Israel's onslaught. Rice was told to scram by an infuriated Lebanese government and Blair took refuge to San Francisco, at the feet of his future employer, Rupert Murdoch. Only the hugely hyped London terror scare took the spotlight off their humiliation.

Hezbollah stood its ground and checked Israel's advance and, as scores of prominent Israelis made haste to point out, it is a victory of great significance. Israel's planes could flatten villages but not silence the Katyushas, nor hold much ground in southern Lebanon. Israel's generals could command the airwaves in Israel and the U.S.A. but not protect northern Israel from bombardment, where Arab Israelis had not even been vouchsafed any shelters or emergency supplies and where the Jewish *Forward* said in early August that the inhabitants could only take it for another week. The forces inside Israel saying there has to be a peaceful solution that addresses the root problem of stolen Palestinian lands have been strengthened.

There are seem to be more realists in Israel's ruling circles than here in the U.S.A., where the utter disaster in Iraq has been so dimly apprehended that the imbecile Cheney vigorously encouraged Israel to embark on the same sort of venture in Lebanon, maybe as a curtain-raiser to a U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran. In Israel, the message seems to have soaked in pretty rapidly that they've taken a pasting and that Nasrallah and his forces have emerged victorious.

Moral: U.S. elites are truly, truly stupid, but as the Goths and the Vandals understood, that's can be all to the good, if the desired objective is to have the Empire grow weak and in the end slip below the waves. CP

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